



ASLEF

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SPOTLIGHT ON SCOTLAND



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Learning: ASLEF says education adds up

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Beware a dangerous protest

LAST month UKIP – the UK Independence Party – came second in the Eastleigh by-election. The general view was ‘don’t worry’. Political commentators told us not to be concerned because people vote in mysterious ways in by-elections and more sensibly in General Elections. The people of Eastleigh were also soothing. Many said voting UKIP was ‘just a protest vote’.

That is the appeal of Nigel Farage’s crew. His party’s message is basically, ‘If you don’t have faith in politicians, vote for us.’

It is shameful that many politicians are seen to be more bothered about their personal ambitions and desire for celebrity than the concerns of their constituents. I see two ways of dealing with this.

One is to restore confidence in politicians by ensuring we are represented by people we know and can relate to, who are approachable and understand what we want. That’s why we ran ASLEF’s first week-long political training course last month (see page 8).

The second is to give up. One way of doing this is to vote for UKIP. And it’s dangerous.

I don’t want to sound over-dramatic, but it was precisely the Nazi Party’s appeal when the people lost faith in Germany’s political processes in the 1930s. They wanted to protest – and ended up creating a monster.

I’m not suggesting that UKIP are akin to Hitler’s Party. But I do believe they are dangerous.

Take one example. Last month Labour’s MEP for the North East, Stephen Hughes, pushed a new initiative on removing asbestos from public buildings in the EU through the European Parliament. He called for the removal of asbestos from all public buildings and buildings requiring public access by 2028, an EU-wide model for screening and registration of asbestos, and a roadmap for its removal.

The voting was 558 votes in favour and 51 against. All the UKIP MEPs voted against.

Doesn’t that show you what UKIP really means? It’s a long way from casual protest.

Mick Whelan, General Secretary



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**More than
just a union**

New charges threaten Scots coal freight

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR), which sets charges for operators using the rail network, is to introduce an additional charge of £4.04 a tonne on coal being used for electricity generation from 2016. This could increase the cost of transporting coal from Scotland to English power stations by up to 40%.

The Freight Trade Association (FTA) estimates this could lead to

- the loss of 4,000 Scottish jobs
- some 150,000 more coal lorries being forced onto Scotland's roads
- increased road congestion and accidents; and
- increased pollution.

The FTA says its coal-sector members are

investigating shifting their coal traffic from rail to road, leading to an extra 148,000 lorries producing 16,000 tonnes of CO₂. 'How does that fit with the Government's environmental agenda?' the association asks.

And an additional threat is that exporting coal to England could become uneconomic, which would put at risk over 4,000 jobs in rural parts of Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. Opencast mining in Scotland still accounts for 1,500 jobs, supports a further 3,000 jobs and is worth more than £450 million to the Scottish economy.

Mick Whelan, ASLEF's general secretary, said the higher charges fly in the face of government pledges to increase the amount

of freight transported by rail - and could result in the closure of the Scottish indigenous coal industry in the medium term. About half the five million tonnes of coal extracted annually in Scotland is exported by rail to power stations in the Aire Valley.

Transport Scotland, which speaks for the Scottish government, said it is 'disappointed' with the ORR decision to increase track access charges. Mick Whelan says he is considerably more than disappointed and the union is urging Holyrood to use all the influence it has to prevent a move that is clearly to the detriment of rail freight, the coal industry and the electricity sector in Scotland.

● See **Hugh Bradley** on page 13

NX investors wary of UK rail

The chief executive of National Express (NX) says some investors in his company have 'lost trust' in the UK rail market because of this country's franchising contortions. 'Now even investors think it's a nonsense arrangement,' said ASLEF's Mick Whelan. 'Is there anyone out there who still thinks franchising is a good plan?'

NX says investors were put off by the West Coast Main Line franchise debacle last year and are now incensed that they face losing the £10 million plus the company

spent bidding for Great Western. The government is not committed to reimbursing bidders' costs.

NX boss Dean Finch summed up, 'Investors have absolutely lost trust in UK rail, they are nervous of it, they are anxious about our investments in it, they see these volatile and arbitrary decisions by the DfT and are not enthusiastic supporters of the UK rail franchising system.'

Mick Whelan said that made a 'full flush' of objectors to the franchising game. 'Taxpayers, staff



and passengers have already condemned it and now we find that even shareholders don't like it. The government stands more isolated on this issue than Vicky Pryce at a Chris Huhne social.'

Start on Scots crossing project

A railway level crossing in Lochaber has become the first in the Highlands to be upgraded as part of a nationwide safety improvement project.

New 'Stubby' barriers have been installed at the Corpach crossing, on the Fort William-Mallaig section of the West Highland Line, in an overall £4 million Network Rail scheme to improve open level crossings.

Good news and bad for Lugg crossing

The good news? Network Rail has confirmed that the Moreton-on-Lugg (Herefordshire) signal box used to raise the barriers at a level crossing where Jane Harding died in January 2010 is to be closed.

The bad? They say it will be shut 'within 20 years'!

Royal Train drivers recognised

A number of drivers have been presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for services to the Royal Train. They are Bob Fraser (Acton), Joe Paxton (Bescot), Frank Sutton (Bescot), Mike Smurthwaite (Bristol), Steve Bates (Bristol), Willie Ward (Carlisle), Colin Park (Carlisle), Chris Kneale (Crewe), Joe Wray (Doncaster), Colin Newcombe (Doncaster), Eddie

Evans (Eastleigh), Wayne Thompson (Eastleigh), Andy Denton (Healey Mills), Andy Flett (Hither Green), Rod Gray (Ipswich), Phil George (Margam), Campbell Pow (Mossend), Dave Cowan (Mossend), Darren Hughes (Newport), Lawrence Pierce (St Blazey), Darrin Hart (St Blazey), Dave Harrison (Tyne Yard), Peter Stobbert (Tyne Yard), Nick Roberts (Warrington), Lee Carley (Warrington), Ian Funai (Westbury), Graham Jenkins (Wembley) and Steve Baxter (Wembley).

DRIVERLESS TRAIN WATCH!

Fines of £300,000 were levied on London Underground, Tube Lines and Schweerbau GMBH after a runaway train passed through seven stations and came within 2,000 feet of crashing into a packed tube train last August. The Old Bailey heard that a maintenance wagon broke free from the empty passenger train which was towing it.

The three firms pleaded guilty to endangering passengers and staff.

A railway line closed after a major landslide is not likely to reopen until the summer.

The spoil heap collapse at Hatfield Colliery at Stainforth, South Yorkshire, has pushed up the track.

Network Rail said the damage was 'a lot worse than we originally thought'.

Rail services between Doncaster, Scunthorpe and Cleethorpes are expected to be suspended until the end of June.



The spoil heap at Hatfield has stopped moving, NR says

Wages – different values for us and them

A SLEF general secretary Mick Whelan asked today why totally different principles apply to managers and workers when it comes to negotiating salaries.

'ASLEF members need to justify wage increases on the basis of productivity, of how much we have improved,' Mick says. 'Figures released today show that managers' pay increases are in direct proportion to their failure.'

A Which? survey today showed that more than half of the train companies have a customer satisfaction score of 50% or less. It says that only 22% of rail passengers believe their service is improving - despite above-inflation fare rises last month.

Britain's most unhappy

passengers travel on First Capital Connect, where only 40% say they are satisfied with the service. Then the misery-line ratings go up with

- Greater Anglia scoring 42%
- Southeastern, 43%
- First Great Western, 43%
- Northern, 44%
- London Midland, 45%
- South West Trains, 47%
- Southern, 48%
- Arriva Trains Wales, 48%

'So obviously the top executives of these train operating companies will be accepting responsibility and reducing their wages?' Mick suggests. 'Wrong? Their incomes are rocketing.'

For example

- CrossCountry's highest paid director in 2011 picked up



£222,000 including pension contributions

- Network Rail's chief executive was on an annual basic salary of £560,000 in March last year
- 30 senior managers of Crossrail pocket over £100,000 a year
- Over 220 managers at Transport for London trouser over £100,000.

○ FirstGroup's chief executive 'earned' a salary last year of £846,000, plus a £134,000 pension allowance and £75,000 for 'benefits in kind'.

- The Chief Executive of National Express gets a salary of £550,000 with an 'extra performance-based bonus'!
- Go-Ahead chief executive also gets over half a million a year.

American unionist enjoys Tea Parties!

Last month the celebrated United States union organiser Stewart Acuff spoke at the TUC about his fascinating life, the state of labour laws in the US - and his latest book 'Playing Bigger Than You Are: A Life in Organizing'.

The son of a Baptist preacher, Stewart began union recruitment in Georgia. He helped build a union of 2,500

state workers despite the fact that public employees in Georgia had no collective bargaining rights, no dues check-off, no rights to meet and confer and no provisions for union recognition.

'Social progress is slow in the States,' Stewart says. 'It's the legacy of a history that involved centuries of genocide and decades of slavery. We

had a long way to go.

A clear example of this is the state of labour laws in the US. There are no penalties against employers who sack workers for attempting to recruit union members - and there is certainly no right to strike.

'We've got more backwoods men than we've got back woods,' he says - but adds that he has a certain affection of the Tea



Stewart congratulates the Tea Party on its work of destroying the Republicans!

Party. 'Yes, they've done more to destroy the Republican Party than anyone around,' he says with a smile.

Wales crash lorry driver escapes jail

The lorry driver who drove over a crossing and caused a collision with a train at Llanboidy level crossing near Whitland has avoided a prison sentence.

At Swansea Crown Court he admitted endangering the lives of passengers and was found to have been guilty of 'a high degree of neglect'. Oswald Davies' nine-month jail sentence was suspended for 18 months and he was ordered to carry out 300 hours of community work.

ASLEF general secretary Mick Whelan pointed to the 'considerable disparity' between those who trespass on the line, causing a real potential for a major catastrophe - and how rail staff are treated if they make a genuine error or mistake.

'It is community service for some - and a loss of livelihood for others,' he said. 'If a train driver was utterly careless and chose to run through a few red lights, he would be imprisoned without a thought. Yet a car or tractor driver does the same thing and it is too often treated as an unfortunate accident.'



○ REGULATOR CALLS FOR 'RESILIENT' RAIL!

The ORR has noticed that the railway needs to be more resilient 'in weather conditions such as snow and heavy rain'. ASLEF's Mick Whelan said, 'I am sure the travelling public will be highly impressed with this dramatic insight.'

Removing his tongue from his cheek, Mick added, 'That's why I call on the rail regulator to campaign with the unions to ensure there is investment in the infrastructure. The ORR should get active, rather than simply sulking on the platform. It should be demanding rail financing that plans for the long-term, and it should be lending vocal support to opposing cuts in Network Rail's budget.'

○ TAX CODE REVIEW SERVICE

The people who carry out the union's tax code review services tell us that at the end of last year 17,806 ASLEF members had used the service in total, and that the average tax refund was over £200. Enquires should be addressed to PTS (Marketing) LLP, Labyrinth House, 43-47 Middle Hillgate, Stockport, SK1 3DG or by phoning 0161 480 7717.

RSSB wants your views on suicide prevention

R All staff are key to helping reduce the number of suicide attempts occurring on the network – so the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) wants your views on how well its ASLEF-backed suicide prevention programme is working so far.

The Board is carrying out a survey of staff about

- Participation in suicide prevention programme activities
- Views on the programme's effectiveness
- Attitudes about suicide
- Experiences of suicide on the railway

Examples of interventions that might have prevented a suicide

on the railway

- Your ideas for how the suicide prevention programme could be improved further.

They say, 'We are interested in hearing from station staff, train drivers, mobile operations managers and any other members of staff who might encounter a member of the public who is suicidal or get involved in dealing with a suicide incident. We would like to hear from people who have participated in programme activities and those who have not.

'We would really appreciate your input.'

Some companies will be distributing paper copies of the questionnaire but they can also



be completed online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/suicides>

The RSSB says it should take about 25 minutes to complete the survey and stresses that all replies will remain anonymous. If you have any questions, you can email enquirydesk@rssb.co.uk

ASLEF has given its full support to the Network Rail/ Samaritans joint suicide prevention programme since its introduction three years ago. Suicides account for over 200 fatalities a year. The initiative is currently being evaluated by the RSSB and the Tavistock Institute.

Workers Memorial Day events on 28 April

Alan Moss of the union's Virgin Trains Safety Advisory Committee says Workers' Memorial Day is 'one of the most important events in the calendar for safety reps', which is why he and Colin Smith are mobilising activists for an event in Manchester.

'I know it's a Sunday this year, but we're urging ASLEF members to join us in Albert Square at 11:00 on 28 April,' Alan says. 'There'll be music in the square and then a gathering at the People's History Museum to 'Remember the Dead, and Fight for The Living.'

After hearing speakers from the

families of people killed at work and union safety representatives, the Albert Square event will close, not with the traditional silence, but a 'Shout for Safety'.

'We've given up being quiet about these unnecessary deaths,' says District Organiser Colin Smith. 'We're asking people to fetch along pots and pans and make a real din this year!'

There are events all over the country (see the TUC website <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-21912-f0.cfm>) and ASLEF members are encouraged to participate as much as they can.

○ DELAYS CAUSED BY DAMAGED OVERHEAD WIRES

Damaged overhead wires near Milton Keynes caused major delays on the West Coast Main Line last month.

There was some form of disruption for three weeks on the run on either the East or West Coast main lines because of problems with overhead power lines.

'These incidents do seem to make an unequivocal case for the government to rip up its ill-advised plans to cutback Network Rail's funding by 19% over the next five years,' said Mick Whelan.

○ METROLINK TRAMS REACH OUT

The first Metrolink tram rumbled out of Rochdale station on 28 February – marking a significant moment in the network's expansion. The 7.4 km extension of the Oldham line from Shaw & Crompton now connects Rochdale Railway Station via existing stations at Newhey and Milnrow and two new tram stops at Kingsway and Newbold.



Prior to the ASLEF event, Mick Whelan spoke at the Unite Against Fascism rally in the city

MEMBERS WEEKEND IN CAMBRIDGE

It was a pleasure to meet friends old and new at the Members' Weekend organised by District No 5 at the Arundel House Hotel in Cambridge last month.

Over 30 members from across our District came to the event, which was opened by our General Secretary Mick Whelan. After Mick had given an overview of current issues facing the union, the TUC's Sarah Veale praised ASLEF for being 'at the fore-front of equality' and Vicky Phillips from Thompsons solicitors talked about

government changes to employment tribunals. The day ended with a moving account from Mariela Kohon of Justice for Colombia.

Day two began with pain-killers, a session with Lisa Forbes (Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Peterborough) and a

talk on ASLEF's history from union Trustee and Ruskin student Mark Daniels. District 5 executive member Howard Kaye spoke on the follies of franchising, honing in on the success of the East Coast line since it returned to public hands.

Finally Richard Howitt, the MEP for our area argued the benefits of European Union membership.

Thanks to all who organised the event. I came away with more confidence, understanding of the union and knowledge of politics. And we all had an enjoyable couple of days!

Paul Cutmore, Chingford Branch



Richard Howitt MEP (left) and Lisa Forbes (Parliamentary candidate for Peterborough) with event Chair Les Muir, Mark Steele and District Secretary Nigel Gibson

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Training for political activists

ASLEF members from all over Britain gathered in Lincolnshire last month for the union's first week-long Political Training Course reports **Andy Botham**. The aim was to provide the skills, knowledge and support for our members to put themselves forward as political representatives with confidence.

It proved to be an intense (11 hour days!), informative and enjoyable course, led by political lobbyist Mark Walker, Nottingham Councillor Michael Edwards and former MP John Hepple and Hemsworth MP John Trickett. Topics covered included speech writing, interview techniques, public speaking, canvassing and how to get through a party selection process.

Anyone who has been involved at any level of politics will know how complicated and confusing it seems to an outsider. This is one of



the main reasons why we have ended up with a continuous stream of professional politicians going straight from university into the Westminster village rather than from traditional working backgrounds.

ASLEF hasn't had an MP since 1970.

Hopefully this course will help us to remedy this situation!

Thanks are due to Kevin Maguire, the Daily Mirror's Associate Editor and to Mick Whelan, Simon Weller and the EC for organising the event.

WORKERS MORE INCLINED TO BACK EUROPE

Polling undertaken by Unions21 last month suggests that in any future referendum on the EU, UK workers would vote to stay part of Europe.

Of the full and part-time employees questioned by Survation, 45% said they would vote to stay in the EU compared to 41% who indicated they would vote to leave.

74% said they would be concerned at losing the rights workers had benefitted from in the EU.

The poll findings suggest that British workers are less Eurosceptic than the public at large – a Survation poll in January found that only 36% of the general public would vote to keep Britain in the EU, compared to 54% who would want to leave.

Driver praised for etiquette announcement!

The train driver who used the public announcement to suggest a person on a mobile phone might quieten down has been patted on the back by his passengers and by Peter Foot, the chairman of the National Campaign for Courtesy. Even though we didn't know this organisation existed until then, it was a welcome intervention!

The London Midland driver was taking a train from London to Milton Keynes when he announced, 'This is a special message to the lady travelling in first class in the middle of the train. Please refrain from shouting on the phone as you are annoying other passengers.'

It appears that other passengers had complained to the train crew, who had passed on the message to

the driver.

A spokesman for operator, London Midland, said such announcements were 'not part of any company policy'.

Meanwhile Transport minister Norman Baker says the number of computer-generated announcements on trains has got out of hand and should be reduced. He told the BBC it was unnecessary to have automatic announcements telling people they were on a non-smoking train (when it is banned on all trains), the rules for being in a Quiet carriage or to tell a police officer if they found something suspicious (especially when there aren't any on a train!)

He pointed out that, 'Unnecessary announcements dilute the value of important ones.'

New Union Learning Centre at Brixton

Union Learning Representatives and Project Workers were joined by London Underground managers to mark the opening of a new Learning Centre at Brixton Station last month.

ASLEF Education Project Worker Ian Beckett said, 'We hope that other centres will soon open elsewhere on the London Underground network. Making the



The Learning Centre is available for private study, collective learning and professional development

case for more centres on the Underground, and keeping hold of them, will be entirely dependent on union members making good use of them.'

The address of the centre is: 2nd Floor, Brixton Underground Station, 427 Brixton

Road, London, SW9 8HE. For more information about using the centre please contact Marion Butcher marion.butcher@tube.tfl.gov.uk or Ian Beckett ian.beckett@aslef.org.uk

500 CLUB

The Retired Members' Section 500 Club draw this month has been won by M Colombini who scooped £294 with the winning number of 94, says Alan Taylor of the RMS committee.

ACTION ON JUBILEE LINE

ASLEF members are due to take action on the Jubilee Line on 2 April and 2 May in a dispute about management refusing to give guarantees about its willingness to abide by agreements. The ballot showed over 90% of members in favour of the action.

RAIL MORE POPULAR THAN EVER

Rail usage statistics published by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) show that over 385 million passenger journeys took place on Great Britain's railways over the three months between October and December last year - 14 million more than the same period in the previous year. It is the highest number of passengers over this period since records began.



The workshop sessions came up with interesting ideas and new directions



'We all do maths, all day long,' was the message from one of the workshops



The conference was a time for reflection!

union learning adds up for members

Last month 60 ASLEF Union Learning Representatives met in Peterborough for a Development Seminar where they reviewed the project and focussed their attention on two main themes: outcomes and extending interest in the Maths4Us programme.

Head of ASLEF Education Kevin Lindsay said the scope of the meeting had been deliberately narrowed to allow in-depth examination of a couple of topics. He added, 'It is a good indication of the union's support for learning that we have the General Secretary, two national officers and an Executive Committee member with us today.'

MICK WHELAN praised the increasing professionalism of ASLEF Education, recalling that training had been minimal during his ten years as a ULR. 'Thankfully, that is no longer the case.'

Mick insisted that trade unions are not just about industrial issues and naturally embraced the notion of 'offering people the opportunity to develop themselves to live rich and fulfilling lives.'

Nigel Gibson, the local District Officer, stressed that learning is 'enjoyable and manageable' so long as you are interested in the subject. 'Which accounts for how badly I did at school!' he said. He also paid tribute to the imaginatively wide variety of subjects that ULRs had proposed to members – 'everything from first aid and credit unions, from cheap gym membership to sign language, and languages to computer skills'.

RECORDING SUCCESS

Union records show we have 121 people on 'Skills for Life' courses, 156 on Level Two, 190 learning computer skills, 247 pursuing informal adult and community learning and 413 following further education. But we are sure this is not the full picture – and future funding depends on accurate records.

Reps often don't record initial (and most important) information, advice and guidance (IAG) sessions, because they are informal, so it's felt they 'don't count'. But they do!

Records are also important as reminders to keep in contact with drivers that ULRs may not see for months on end. So why aren't they as up to date as they could be?

It's a mixture of a hectic life, of the drudgery of noting small events, of thinking of text

messages or email sent as 'not worth jotting down' and at times the rather British trait of 'not being seen to blow your own trumpet'.

The tutor's advice was to the point. 'Realise what you do – and then show off about it!'

SUMMING UP

The workshop to promote the 'Maths4Us' website took as its starting point the fact that people use maths and numbers all the time without noticing. 'People say, 'I'm no good at Maths' because they don't know geometry or fractions. They are selling themselves short,' the ULRs were told.

'In our everyday lives we constantly do mathematical calculations. At work we measure walking times, consult timetables, train times, station stops, platform locations – and payslips. Outside work we calculate budgets, miles to the gallon, supermarket 'bargains'. We gauge pension entitlements, interest rates.

Congratulations to ASLEF's Learner of the Year, King's Cross-based Jason Cooper-Sutton, a driver based at Kings Cross. Starting with basic knowledge of computers and IT in July 2011, he is now confident enough to help friends and family with computer problems. His new skills have led to him to editing his local Multiple Sclerosis newsletter and helping schools in his neighbourhood to produce newsletters, flyers and posters.



ASLEF's Learner of the Year is Jason Cooper-Sutton, seen here receiving his certificate of recognition. Left to right are Howard Kaye, Nigel Gibson, Mick Whelan, Learner winner Jason and Kevin Lindsay

'It's almost a culture to say, 'I can't do maths.' We want 'maths champions' who aren't experts or teachers, but people who will build confidence by helping people recognise that they use figures every day.'

Gary Howlett from Peterborough branch (FCC) says, 'Driving is a lonely occupation and people's minds can become stale. I believe it's a case of 'Use it or lose it.' Gary started learning himself and as a ULR tries to persuade others of the benefits. 'Sometimes they are receptive. Other times it can be like pulling hens' teeth,' he says.



Jonathan Bryan (c2c) says he became a union learning rep after holding an equalities rep post in the branch. 'I've always been an advocate of education,' he says. 'I was working on an Open University degree when I volunteered for it and thought being a ULR would give me the chance to extend learning opportunities to other people.'

Court backs driver on school holiday plea

Skipton member Paul Brazel has been successful in getting a Court's permission to take his grandchildren (he and his wife are the carers) out of school to suit his rostered holidays as a train driver. The alternative, Paul says, would be that the children would have to miss having a holiday because the authorities insist that children are not allowed to be taken out of school outside the school holidays.

Paul says that when he and his wife took responsibility for the two children he told the foster

organization that he could not always have school holidays due to his job. He took them on several holidays without any difficulties.

'But then last year things changed and we had a confrontation about taking the children on holiday with us. This year we were told categorically that we could not take the children with us - even though it was their policy to allow this when a person's job doesn't allow school holidays.

'I was told I could attempt to

take the matter to court under section 33(7) of the Children's Act, seeking leave of the court to remove the children from the jurisdiction.

'I did this with the help of the children's court guardian and letters of support from work. Tosh McDonald from ASLEF was a great help, as was Danny Singh, the area driver manager in Leeds.'

Paul went to court at the end of February. The judge found in his favour after reading the letters of support and hearing how holiday rosters work.



Driver Paul and wife Liz . 'We're pleased that sense has prevailed'

'It's a relief to be able to take the children on holiday in school term time this year,' he says. 'I'm grateful to everyone who has helped us to get to this position.'

IEP cab mock-up visit

ASLEF reps who went to look over a mock-up of the Hitachi IEP cab and train carriage design at DCA in a business unit in Warwick last month included reps from East Coast, officers and Company Council reps.

The mock-up of train carriages showed a bare-bones layout of carriages, toilet, exits and controls with model passenger seats. The interior skeleton of the front of a train was erected at the height it will be when in use on the track.

The main issues discussed were

- the separation of the driver and guard's areas
- the desk layout
- changing the side for CCTV screens to accommodate the second person seat on the right hand side
- keeping primary train controls in front of the driver
- limiting desk control light emissions
- The separation of communications between driver and train crew from communications with passengers
- the need for an adjustable, comfortable driving seat
- a slightly sloping cab floor



Photos: Mick Holder



UNION BACKING FOR BBC ACTION

Mick Whelan wrote to the journalists' union (NUJ) to express our backing for their action on 18 February aimed at halting the BBC's redundancy plans. Mick says, 'We support the efforts of the National Union of Journalists in its attempt to bring security, quality and pride back to those engaged in the craft of journalism; and in particular we offer our full support in the action you are taking today at the BBC.'

Thanking Mick, NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet said, 'The BBC, which has already lost more than 7,000 jobs since 2004, plans to cut a further 2,000 people's employment.

'BBC journalists care deeply about the quality of programming and the corporation's duty as a public service broadcaster. That is why so many were prepared to strike to save jobs and quality journalism.'

LABOUR IN LONDON

At the London Labour Party conference, Nigel Gibson addressed a lunch-time fringe meeting of the Communication Worker's Union London Region on the subject of possible public ownership of the telecommunications industry, drawing parallels with developments in both the mail and rail sectors while Dave Calfe seconded a composite motion with Unite on the subject of 'Investing in London's economy' in which he argued that investment in transport infrastructure was crucial to boosting jobs and growth in the city. The delegates held a range of informal meetings with fellow trade unionists and constituency representatives.



ASLEF's delegation to the 2013 London Labour Party Conference at Stratford Town Hall in February consisted of Graham Morris (District Organiser, District 1), Nigel Gibson (District Organiser, District 5), Cliff Holloway (Euston) and Dave Calfe (EC Member, District 6)

New phase for marathon Crossrail

London's huge Crossrail development is entering a new phase, with 26 miles of tunnels being dug beneath London.

The £14.8 billion project, due to be completed in 2018, will connect Maidenhead and Heathrow in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east and will increase London's rail capacity by 10%.



The tunnelling works near Stepney Green in London's East End



ASLEF

OVER THE BORDER

Scotland takes a democratic lead



The vote on whether Scotland should become an independent country will be fascinating not just because of its outcome, but also because it will be the first time people aged 16 will be able to vote. This will go ahead

regardless of the outcome of the Westminster government's vote on the issue

which is due to take place later this year.

I welcome the decision to allow 16-year-olds the vote. After all they have the legal right to apply for legal aid, be detained in custody, have sex, move out of the family home, rent accommodation, get married (with parental consent), agree to medical treatment, choose their own doctor, leave school, work full time, join the armed forces, invest in an ISA, drink beer or cider with a meal, order a passport and ride a motorbike of 50cc. Given this list, to deny them the right to vote seems completely unreasonable to me.

It is illogical to say that we want to involve people in politics and eliminate voter apathy - and at the same time refuse the vote to

young people. There is surely no safer formula for alienating them! The last Labour government introduced Citizenship into the National Curriculum. Students are taught how to play a role in public life and encouraged to take an interest in current affairs in a democratic society. Then they are told they aren't allowed to vote! How do you think they feel about that?

I hope there is a huge turnout of 16 and 17-year-olds when the Scots vote next year. And equally I hope they will have taken part in a decision to stay in the UK. You might think you can do without us - but we can't do without you!

Mick Whelan
General Secretary

Constant challenges – but creeping progress

Our members have faced a number of challenges since I last wrote an introduction to a Scottish edition of the Journal. It's to all our credit that we've faced up to them and we keep moving forwards.

One perennial challenge is to enforce our long-standing policy of removing institutional overtime from our industry, but we've always worked with companies who were recruiting and had training requirements. We've backed rest day working when necessary, but always for the benefit of our members.

When we were in dispute with Scotrail in December 2011 they committed to recruiting enough drivers to cover their service and our drivers' leave requirements. They have recruited over 70 drivers in the last 12 months, but unfortunately their training is not complete. With this in mind the union supports an extension until

the end of August which enabled us to safeguard the present agreement on guaranteed lieu leave. If Scotrail requires rest day working after this, we will discuss their requirements with them.

As the union's lead officer for Virgin West Coast trains, I've had a front-row seat in their squabble with First Group and the DfT over the franchise. Many members favoured Virgin, many were suspicious of working for First Group, but the ASLEF view is simple: we want both private operators out of our industry. Both bids showed everything that is wrong with the discredited franchising system: staff are a tool to make money; social responsibility is an empty slogan; shareholders' interests come before passengers. While this is the case, our railway is going to suffer.

As you'll know, Virgin are running the franchise at present on a 'no risk' management contract. This means the DfT are paying them to run it on their behalf - and the Coalition government will seek to interfere in this year's pay discussions. Virgin has admitted that they will only offer what the DfT approves. It's hard to negotiate with an employer who can't - or won't -



negotiate. Rest assured we will push for a fair settlement and not allow Virgin to hide behind the DfT.

Our freight members have seen the stark reality of a 'free-market' private railway as contracts are lost and driver numbers driven down. The uncertain future over depots and jobs brings additional strains on our members and their families. We have successfully ensured that not one driver has been made compulsory redundant, but it is unacceptable that some are being forced to move home, sometimes

out of Scotland.

Freight companies and the Scottish Government must do more to encourage more freight onto rail rather than allowing our already congested and polluted roads to get worse. The freight companies should be concentrating on new business rather than poaching contracts from each other.

Kevin Lindsay,
ASLEF's
Officer in
Scotland



Gas, not rhetoric, is what Scots want ...



... declares Anas Sarwar, the deputy leader of the Scottish Labour Party and MP for Glasgow Central, a seat he took over from his father Mohammad Sarwar, the UK's first Muslim MP

A recent opinion poll in the Daily Record confirmed there is a disconnect between what politicians are talking about and what people care about.

While politicians talk about inflationary pressures and the Monetary Policy Committee, families are worried about rising gas bills and being able to pay their mortgages.

And worst of all, too many politicians are spending too much time debating which politicians have which powers rather than getting on with the job of helping get people back to work, reducing health inequalities, improving living standards or making sure we are looking after older people with respect and dignity.

People I speak to are angry. Angry at the banks who they see as responsible for the current crisis behaving as if nothing had ever happened. Angry at energy companies who grow their profits by hiking household bills.

And what recourse do people have? They see a political system that appears to be broken. A political system that isn't working for the people who need it most.

People trust their politicians and government to act in their interest, in the

interest of their family and community and in the interests of their country.

Politicians are, in effect, the trustees of the citizen, the holder of the social contract with the people who elected them.

Today I believe that contract has been broken.

Today I believe there is a real need for political representatives to restore that trust not just by words but through their deeds.

Because the truth is; our politics may be broken - but our country is not.

WE NEED A NEW FOCUS

The choices we make as politicians have consequences on the people we seek to represent yet some have got the focus all wrong.

For many children their life is mapped out by their circumstances at birth; poorer health, poorer education outcomes, reduced social opportunities, higher rates of alcoholism or mental illness.

Yet for some the approach is to ignore the inequality and focus instead on a sticking plaster approach. For some the focus on why we entered politics has been lost,

That is why I want the Labour values I signed up to when I joined to be the basis of

our politics of tomorrow; the principles of Community, Solidarity, Fairness, Equality and Social Justice.

Because the fight for these great causes doesn't stop at borders, poverty doesn't recognise lines on a map, where treatment on the NHS should be on the basis of need, not on the basis of nationality.

The people of Glasgow have as much in common with the people of Liverpool as they do the rest of Scotland. And we know that we have responsibilities and obligations to people right across the UK just as those rights and obligations are shared by them too.

If one part of the UK is in trouble the other parts step in to help, pooling our resources to help others in need.

We all share the same workers' rights or the same pension rights whichever part of the UK we are from and Corporation Tax is the same wherever a business is based. One part of the UK can't undercut other parts of the UK. Any fragmentation of workers' rights or tax levels would see the good undercut by the bad and the bad undercut by the worst. It would lead to a race to the bottom.

That is not the kind of country I want to see and I don't believe it's the kind of country the majority of Scots want to see.



There is a disconnect between voters and politicians

○ EAST COAST TO STAY PUBLIC?

According to a Financial Times report, the East Coast main line looks set to remain under state control until the end of the decade after ministers instructed the management team of the nationalised operator to draw up a five-year plan.

○ DON'T GAMBLE – TAKE THE TRAIN!

The odds of dying before the age of 75 are one in 976 in a car, one in 54,433 on a plane and one in 131,313 in a train according to the healthcare journal Bandalier.

Road injuries are the fifth cause of years of life lost after heart disease, self-harm, cirrhosis and breast cancer, and just above drug use.

'The good news about traveling by train just keeps rolling in,' says ASLEF's general secretary Mick Whelan. 'It saves lives, it cuts pollution, and it's increasingly reliable and punctual. If fares were cheaper and the public transport network more integrated, rail would be the only transport show in town – and out of town.'



CRANE FALLS ON RAILS AT PORTGOWER

A stretch of road and rail line was forced to close last month when a mobile crane toppled off the A9 in the Highlands onto adjacent tracks.

The machine fell over near the village of Portgower in Sutherland and when rail services between Inverness and Wick were disrupted, replacement buses could not run because of the road blockage on the A9.

Freight: there may be trouble ahead - again!

Hugh Bradley, the union's executive committee member in Scotland, assesses the freight of the nation ...

Once again there is cause for concern in the rail freight industry in Scotland as this recession continues to bite.

Again we have found ourselves in the unfortunate position of having to deal with surplus Drivers within DBS in Scotland due to a downturn in traffic flows.

An agreement has now been concluded with Drivers moving within DBS, moving to other companies or some, unfortunately, deciding to leave the industry altogether.

We knew there was trouble pending for the FOCs when the

Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) said it intended to introduce an additional charge on the coal being used for electricity generation of £4.04 per tonne from 2016. In effect this would increase the cost of coal transportation from the Scottish coal fields to the English power stations by up to 40%. Apparently the Freight Transport Association has advised that they have members investigating the possibility of moving from rail to road haulage to move the coal.

This would equate to an extra 148,000 lorries hurtling about our congested roads producing an extra 16,000 tonnes of CO2!

However this has now been overtaken by the shock announcement (7 March 2013) that Scottish Resources Group intends to decimate the number of coal miners they employ due to the sharp fall in the price of coal globally. This would result in six of their eight surface mines being affected - impacting in 450 miners



facing redundancy.

This will have a serious effect on the rail operations at both Killoch and Ravenstruther, where trains are loaded to be transported to the English power stations. In turn, this will have a potential impact on all the Freightliner Heavy Haul depots which move the coal. This again shows the precarious position that our members in the freight industry face in the privatised free-market rail industry where their jobs are at risk due to random outside influences.

Obviously we will be watching the situation closely as developments unfold.

Currently, there is a strange sense of irony with the news that

DRS is looking to open a Traincrew Depot at the old 'Motherwell Sheds' due to their increased 'modern day supermarket' traffic flows. The railways came to Motherwell in the 1860s due to the newly discovered Lanarkshire coal fields and there was a traincrew presence since then until 2005 when DBS relocated to the nearby Mossend.

Given all of this, it shows how we are still impacted by 'King Coal'.



Hugh Bradley is the union's executive committee member in Scotland

Bright picture for learning in Scotland

An update on ASLEF Education in Scotland from ALAN REID, the project leader in Scotland, who can be contacted on alan.reid@aslef.org.uk

THE past twelve months has seen ASLEF Education (Scotland) complete another year of Scottish Union Learning Development Fund project (formally SULF) building on the foundations laid during the previous four-year ASLEF Proud to Educate project.

During the past year we have successfully run a diet of courses through our partnership with Stow College Trade Union Education Department. This saw the College continue to deliver free shift-friendly courses such as numeracy and literacy, CV writing and interview skills, computing, modern languages and sign language to our members in stations and depots throughout Scotland, from Aberdeen in the north to Dumfries in the south and Ayr in the west to Edinburgh in the east, as well in the Rail

Union Learning Centre based in the college.

ASLEF, through Scottish Union Learning and Stow College, has provided courses over the past year for 100-plus learners and ran additional development days for our Union Learning Representatives in Scotland.

Through additional funding from the STUC's Scottish Union Learning Fund (which is in turn funded through the European Social Fund) we have also run successful courses open to all members, aimed at teaching them new skills. We ran two IT presentation/communication skills courses at Yoker Depot via Reid Kerr College and again at Edinburgh Waverley through Edinburgh College. Between the two courses there were 17 attendees.

ASLEF also worked with Stow College TU education in setting up a CV interview skills course at Millerhill Depot for nine members in the rail freight sector.

Within ScotRail ASLEF has been pivotal in the creation of the Rail Customer Service Modern Apprenticeship for school leavers, which has seen the company employ



Stow College in Glasgow which houses the Rail Union Learning Centre – but most of our courses are in the most convenient locations for members

another 15 school leavers on a 18-month apprenticeship with the guarantee of further employment at the end of the scheme. We have also continued to work, with our colleagues in England, on the upgrading of the drivers' vocational qualification from level 2 to level 3 and on the creation of the train drivers' apprenticeship.

As one project ends another one begins with the securing of funding for 2013-14. This will see ASLEF Education continue to deliver on the skills and learning agenda in Scotland to our membership and beyond.

Transport links our lands

says **Blair McDougall**, the Campaign Director of Better Together, the cross party campaign that promotes the view that Scotland is a better and stronger country as part of the United Kingdom.

IF EVER there was an issue that summed up the way that the countries of the UK are tied together, it is transport. Each and every hour of each and every day, planes, trains and automobiles cross the various internal borders within the UK without any pause for thought. Passengers don't need to worry about the border and neither do the staff. Transport is a working example of the best of the United Kingdom.

Separation would be a leap into the unknown for rail staff, management and passengers. What would happen to all of the existing arrangements? What would happen to infrastructure investment? What would happen to staff who work for companies that operate cross border services? The answer, like that of so many issues raised over the past year, is a simple one.

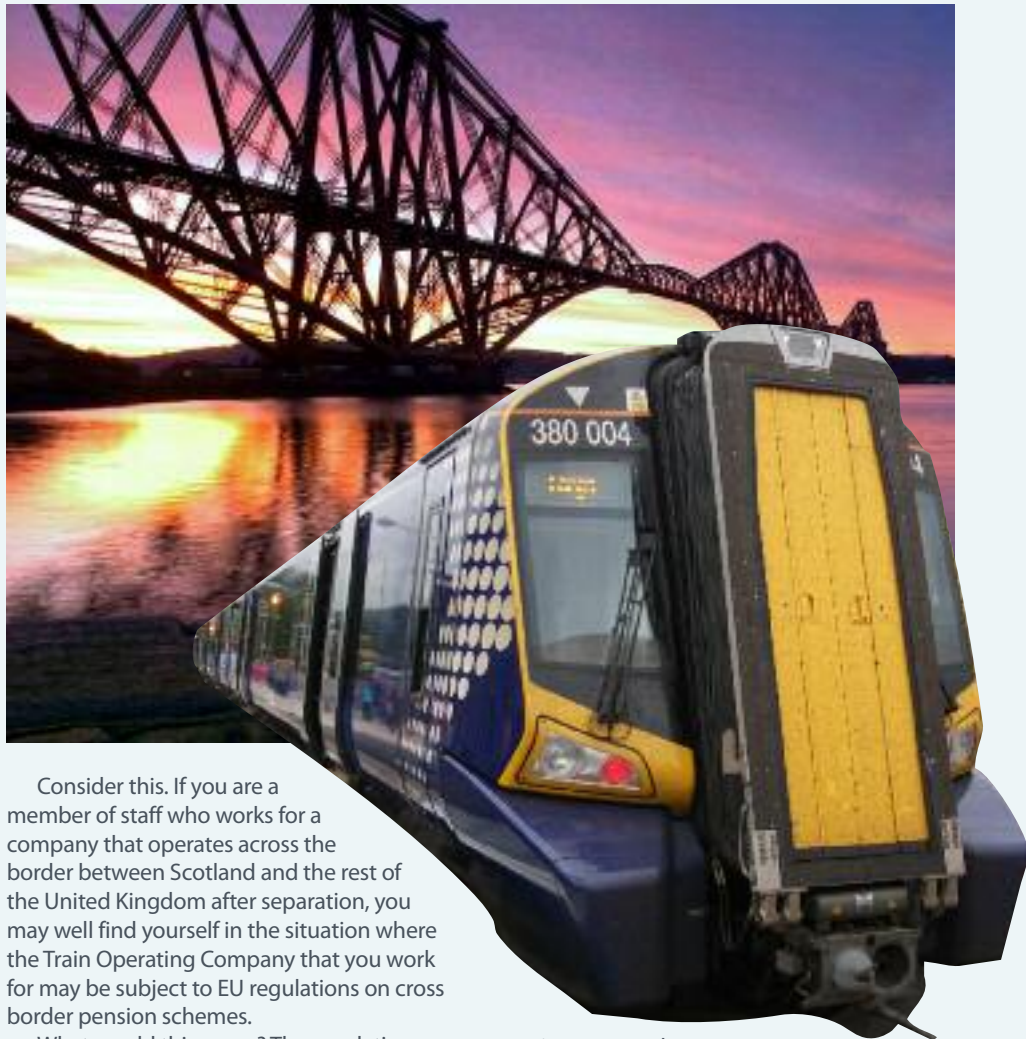
We just don't know.

The nationalists are no doubt working behind the scenes to come up with a set of fudged proposals to try and explain how transport will work if we go it alone, but as we have seen, their approach to everything so far has been to assert that 'we shouldn't worry.' That 'everything is going to be alright.'

DETAILS MATTER, NOT VAGUE STATEMENTS

ASLEF and its members know that this won't cut it as an answer. Details are hugely important. It is not good enough to constantly talk about why we should separate. The people who would be the most severely impacted – with rail staff most definitely among that group – need to know how we will separate and what will happen to their jobs.

Even if you overlook for a moment the massive structural problems that separation would bring – what happens to franchises, what happens to the infrastructure investment programme, will Scotland have to take on a percentage share of the Network Rail debt? – simply looking at what happens to staff and their terms and conditions is enough to give us pause for thought.



Consider this. If you are a member of staff who works for a company that operates across the border between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom after separation, you may well find yourself in the situation where the Train Operating Company that you work for may be subject to EU regulations on cross border pension schemes.

What would this mean? The regulations state that valuations must take place annually rather than triennially. This will undoubtedly increase costs. ASLEF members will potentially face the prospect of unaffordable contributions or reduced pension benefits simply as a result of new administrative processes. Where is the benefit in this?

MORE REGULATORS, MORE TOCS?

If we separate, we may see the ludicrous situation where we have cross border services being run by two separate Train Operating Companies, regulated by two different regulators and supported by two entirely separate investment programmes. In a country the size of the UK, how can this possibly be a sensible way to proceed?

The nationalists may not like to admit this, but more profitable routes do subsidise the less profitable ones. The West Coast Main Line is the perfect example of this. The portion of the line that goes between London and Preston is much more profitable than the line between Preston and Glasgow. With separation the West Coast Main Line would stop being an internal route and would, instead, become an international one.

If the numbers don't add up in terms of passenger numbers, where would be the motivation for the operating company to

continue to run the route – or to run the number of trains that go between Scotland and England at present? What would be the implications for jobs? It would be foolish to suggest that there wouldn't be any. Again, where is the benefit in this?

WE WANT AN INFORMED VOTE

Our campaign will be seeking to raise these issues and a thousand more between now and the referendum in Autumn 2014. Every time we ask a question, the nationalists accuse us of scaremongering. They don't want to have a debate, they want to shut down discussion and to hamper the process of scrutinising their plans.

This is not good enough. If we are to vote on something as fundamental as setting up an entirely new country, then we absolutely have to go into the ballot box with our eyes open and with a full understanding of the implications.

ASLEF members will be rightly concerned about the huge amount of uncertainty that this debate will be having for your industry. We would urge you to use this time before the referendum to speak out, to ask questions and to demand answers. If we wake up the day after the referendum and are travelling headlong towards separation, it will be too late to turn back.

MICK FLYE'S MEMORY LIVES ON AT CREWE

Friday 8 February saw a small service at Crewe Station where a plaque was unveiled in memory of ASLEF Member Mick Flye who sadly passed away whilst carrying out his duties last October. Mick's widow, Jane, was present along with a large gathering of family members, friends and colleagues.

After a quick introduction and a few 'thank you's' to those who had made the event possible, Railway Chaplain Richard Cooke blessed the plaque and we held a minute's silence. We then retired to one of the meeting rooms on the station where those gathered shared many a fond

memory of Mick.

The plaque was commissioned by Brother George Hill who arranged its delivery and fitting. Thank you, George. You did your comrade proud.

The plaque was paid for with kind donations from railway colleagues across the network. In total, Mick's collection amounted to just over £1,400. At the request of Mick's wife Jane, the remaining money has been donated to the British Heart Foundation.

Though Mick is gone he will never be forgotten. I'm sure you will agree that the



plaque is a lasting and fitting tribute to his memory.

Alan Moss, Longsight Branch

JOHN PIPE A RAIL MAN, A UNION MAN AND A FAMILY MAN

It's always sad when a colleague passes away; none more so than the news that our Brother John Pipe (retired) passed away suddenly at home in mid-December aged 81. The village church in Horsford near Norwich was standing room only with family, friends and colleagues along with representatives of the local Council, former General Secretary Lew Adams and footballer Robert Fleck (Glasgow Rangers, Norwich and Chelsea) coming along to show their support and give thanks for his life.

John was a lifelong rail man, as many of us are, who gave much to the industry and the trade union. He was an LDC rep and later Chairman as well as delegate to the AAD on many occasions, Chairman of the Norwich branch of ASLEF and founder member of the Norwich Loco Welfare Fund as



John was a special man who will be remembered with great fondness

well as an experienced First Aider. John was always there to help when members were in trouble, willing to give advice and to stand his ground when the going got tough as it did on many occasions. He was also on hand to give life-saving support when needed and there are many who are in his debt thanks to his first aid knowledge and quick thinking.

He was also a comedian and had a sharp turn of wit. John could take the flak but was expert at dishing it out when required; none more so than when 'running the line' for the Loco football team at Wayland Prison (an away match

obviously!) when one of the 'residents' criticised John's decision to award off-side against the home team, 'Oi! Mate! Do you think you're on the 3.30 to London the way you keep waving that flag?' the prisoner shouted. Quick as a flash John replied, 'I bet you wish you were mate!' - a typical Pipe-ism of which there are too many to recall in this short obituary.

A professional boxer in his younger days, a lifelong Norwich

City supporter and season ticket holder, keen gardener and a lover of holidays with his family, a proud husband, father and grandfather, John was a special man. I was proud to be with him when Keith Norman presented him with his 50-year ASLEF membership medallion at the 2009 AAD.

Our condolences to his wife Jean and John's family.

Dave Tyson, Norwich Branch

RONNIE FERGUSON A FURNESS MAN

It is with real sadness that I report the death of 'Ronnie' Ferguson at the age of 83 years. He was a local man who started his footplate career in June 1946 at the Loco Shed in Barrow, where he remained until its closure. This brought on his move to Manchester and the Midland Shed at Trafford Park. A further closure led to his transfer to Oxford Road, and finally across the city to Manchester Victoria where he worked until his retirement.

A real 'rail man' and 'top loco man', Ronnie took a great interest in his job and hence his great knowledge. He was a character in every way, a man who always had a point to discuss. He was always a man of strong views, but always accompanied them with a smile. He was a great asset to his various depots and his numerous work colleagues. Our thoughts are with Ronnie's family at this sad time.

S. Black, Retired Members' Section, Newton Heath



WILLIAM CHARLES MONK WELL RESPECTED HORNSEY MAN

I am sorry to report that one more valued comrade has moved into the top link - Bill Monk, who was born in 1928 and has died at the age of 84.

Bill was one of Hornsey's finest drivers, well-liked and respected. He was born in Southgate and we're told that at the age of 16 he was an aspiring footballer who was offered a place with Manchester City's junior team.

Unfortunately his father did not see any future in aiming to be a professional footballer and wouldn't give his permission. Instead, he told his son to get what he called 'a proper job' and so Bill started his career on the railway.

He was always an active ASLEF member and was rewarded for his activity with an ASLEF silver badge for recruitment. When Hornsey closed as a signing-on point, Bill managed the transfer of Hornsey members into the Kings Cross Branch and the closure of the Hornsey Branch.

As a Kings Cross Branch member he undertook the position of its rep on what we now call the Company Council.

Bill managed to stay very active in his retirement with the able support of his wife Valerie. The couple had two daughters who will greatly miss him. His funeral was well-attended by friends and colleagues who turned out to support the family at this sad time. May Bill RIP.

P. J. Smith, Kings Cross branch reporter

Tom Burns: Perth's Franco- Irish-Scot!

Whatever Perth driver Tom Burns is talking about, he does it with passion. He has views on just about everything, and expresses them with conviction, logic and humour. He says if he had a motto, it would be taken from Ghandi. 'Being in a minority of one doesn't mean you're wrong,' he says with the smile of a man who has clearly been in that very position on more than one occasion. Chris Proctor went to meet him ...

I LIKE to think of myself as a Modern Scotsman,' he tells me when we meet at Edinburgh's Waverley station, 'although I've only a drop of Scots blood in me! My mother is French, and my father's half Irish. I had the bad luck to be born in Dundee.'

I begin to mumble that it's perhaps not a good idea to annoy an entire city, but he adds that this is only by comparison with his siblings. He's the youngest of five, and has one sister who was born in Los Angeles and another in Ghana. 'You have to admit they're a bit more exotic than Dundee!'

He explains that his parents moved around a lot 'for his work'. So what did he do?

'He was a rocket scientist.'

I eye him closely to make sure he's not winding me up. No, honestly. He was. 'He was a remarkable man, a brainiac. His sense of social justice led him to work all over the world. He was always on the side of the wee guy. He died when I was in my early 20s, probably because he smoked two packs of Gitanes cigarettes a day and had a great affection for whisky.'

Tom also calls himself a Modern Railway man as in December 2004 he came off the street into the grade. 'A boil in the bag driver,' he says with a chuckle. 'A microwave man.'

Tom's also very proud of his mother who

originates from Brittany and came to Scotland as a war-time refugee. So does he have a close affinity with France?

'Only when they play England.'

He says one advantage of having a diverse background is that it puts him in a stronger position to argue for a strong UK outside the European Union. 'No one can call me a xenophobe!' he points out.

Born in 1964, Tom says one thing he didn't do at school was shine. 'I left at 16 without much in the way of qualifications. In fact I never really studied anything properly until my driver's course.'

'That was really tough at the start,' he says. 'I didn't know what anyone was talking about! Every industry has its own language and there I was, knee-deep in HR, DRI, rosters'

Train driving is Tom's third job. 'I was a salesman for Toyota, then I went into motor industry training at Perth College, and now I'm a train driver, which is the best of the lot!'

He packed in selling cars because after 14 years 'I got fed up with the futility. My work at Perth College was satisfying for a while. I was doing something useful.'

Tom used his contacts in the motor industry (and his considerable powers of persuasion) to raise money from the trade and the Lottery to finance modern apprenticeships. 'They were proper ones, not work placements,' he says. 'We took kids from 14 upwards and they were employed by a company while Scottish Enterprise paid for their training.'

But then the job changed and Tom found himself sitting at a desk staring at spreadsheets and sorting out budgets

'I had to get out. So I started looking in the local paper for another job - and there it was: Trainee Train Drivers wanted.'

Up to that point Tom had no contact whatever with the railway. 'I'd hardly been on a train,' he says.

After an initial period at Perth depot, he was off to Glasgow for training. 'It really was tough,' he says. 'But now I realise how



Tom's mother retains that unmistakable French style



After a couple of false starts, Tom's a train driver at Perth, where he's assistant secretary of the ASLEF branch



Tom's father was always proud of this picture, taken when he worked at the University of the Gold Coast, as it was until independence in 1957. A keen jazz fan, he met the man in the black coat on the left. It's Louis Armstrong.



For all his opinions, Tom's always ready to laugh at himself



This is Tom outside the Teamster's building in Washington. 'America fascinates me,' Tom says. 'It's a country of enigmas. How come they did away with kings and gave their President more power than an absolute monarch?'



Tom (left) Edinburgh Castle (right)!

fortunate I am to be a Perth driver. There's 1,350 miles of route and we go all over the place - Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Cumbernauld - it all makes for varied work and an interesting life. Of course there are grim days but we get some wonderful ones as well.'

'And I have to say that from the moment I arrived at Perth depot, I was accepted without hesitation and without exception; and I've always admired the skill and professionalism of drivers who have been here all their working lives.'

Tom's northern perspective comes sharply into focus when we touch on politics. He declares himself a strong supporter of the 'Plague On All Your Houses' Party. National politicians live in a bubble they can't see out of - and it's facing south.

'You can see it from the cab. I applaud any investment in rail, but it's difficult to get excited about HS2 and ERTMS when I'm still driving past semaphore signals at Stirling.'

Tom backs the 'Better Together' campaign, but the last Labour government is a huge source of great irritation to this self-confessed 'side-line political heckler'. 'At least the Tories are consistent,' he points out. 'They look after their own. Labour didn't do that.'

But while Tom's never been a member of a political party, but he's always been fascinated by the political process. 'It astounds me how the ruling class has managed to persuade ordinary people that we live in an open democracy where we have influence. We have no more influence than we did 150 years ago.'

He also has firm views on general unions, like the ones he'd been active in before joining the railway. 'They get too big. You find people arguing your case who don't know what you do, or what you want.'

'ASLEF's different. And I think the real mark of a union is when we get an appeal from a branch about a driver facing real hardship, and we make the democratic decision to send a donation. I've never experienced that before. You know 100% that you have an extended family that is going to stand with you.'

Tom says there is always something that can be improved in any job and shifts are always a pain but overall he says he's a lucky man. 'I have never known camaraderie like the railways.'

He lives outside Perth at Crieff now, originally because of house prices, but also because it is beautiful and handy for walking into the Highlands.



Always interested in politics, but Tom's never joined a party

'We enjoy taking the sleeper down to London to do our culture vulture bit,' Tom says. 'We get around the galleries, theatres and museums. In fact,' he adds with a soft chuckle, 'the only thing better is getting back to Scotland!'

A HUNDRED YEARS OF UNION

The ASLEF Locomotive Journal of April 1913 reported solidarity with strikers in the North-East, commented on the Scott expedition and considered a US politeness drive ...

SUPPORT AFTER NE FINES

After a strike in the north-east, the Journal reported: 'I am desired by the members of the Newcastle and District Branches to thank their fellow members of the A.S.L.E. & F. who have made such a generous response to the appeal to assist them to pay the week's fine, which was imposed by the North-Eastern Railway Company, as a condition of returning to work so as the imported men

should be removed and sent to the place from whence they came. The action of our fellow members shows the true spirit of trade unionism in helping one another in time of need, and if at any time we can reciprocate their kindness we shall be quite willing to do so.'

SYMPATHY FOR SCOTT, BUT NOT FOR POOR

Nota Bene was incensed at public funding to support bereaved

families of the Scott expedition and Charles Dicken's grandchildren:

'From riches to poverty is but a short step, and my next comment has reference to children whose parents are too poor to buy boots for them. No public fund for them! But that doesn't matter to Mr. Cecil Chapman, magistrate at the Tower Bridge, Police Court, London. 'I am not,' he said the other day, 'going to accept the want of boots as an excuse for non-attendance at school. It is better for a child should go to school without boots than that he should not go at all.' A fine dictum, truly.'

AMERICANS LEARN POLITENESS!

Nota Bene also commented on the rules for politeness on the railway in America:

'The Pennsylvania Railroad is endeavouring to instruct its employees in the ethics of courtesy. The following notice has been issued by the company: "An employee on duty is forbidden to address a passenger or patron of the company as "friend," "stranger," "comrade," "brother," "sister," "neighbour," or by any other term of this character. When necessary, if the passenger's or patron's name is not known, use "sir," "madam," or "beg pardon."'

○ Extracts selected and edited by Mick Holder

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londonmidland

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Providing this information will allow us to send you targeted and timely information, particularly in times of dispute or unrest.

There are a number of ways to get this information to us:

- Update your details via the ASLEF website www.aslef.org.uk and log into the member area.
- Email info@aslef.org.uk Include your full name, branch, mobile number and email address in the body of the email.
- Give your name, mobile number and email address to your branch secretary, to post on to head office. Your details will not be handed on to third parties.



The union is organising an

OPEN FREIGHT FORUM

**On Wednesday 3 April
From 11:00**

At the Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU (nearest tube station: Farringdon).

The event is open to all members but as it will concentrate on informing ASLEF's freight strategy, it will obviously be of more direct relevance to members working in the freight sector.

Numbers will be limited, so if you would like to attend, please contact Dave Gould at head office by email dgould@aslef.org.uk or by phoning 020 73242400.



Battersea marks 125 years

On the 12 February the Battersea branch celebrated its 125th birthday. Several former members of the branch were in attendance, along with the General Secretary, National Organiser and other union officers.

Mick Whelan made a presentation to the branch to mark its reaching this milestone before awarding a medallion to retired member Roger ('Dodgy') Owen in recognition of 50 years as a member of ASLEF. Roger served as a Local Staff Representative for many years.

After the formal business past and present branch



Mick Whelan (right) congratulates Roger on half a century of ASLEF membership

members and our guests ensured the occasion was celebrated in the traditional ASLEF manner.

I would like to thank Malcolm Hough for his work researching the history of the Branch, and for his effort in making the evening possible - and enjoyable.

Graham Hoy, Secretary, Battersea Branch



Members past and present raised a glass to a 125th birthday

Brother Tony Farmer was presented with his 35-year badge by executive committee member Marz Colombini at the Brighton branch's ordinary meeting on 21 February, reports branch secretary Mark Johnson



Last month's meeting of the Leytonstone branch was an opportunity for members to bid a fond farewell to its Chairman Martin Struthers. 'Martin's a fantastic character,' says EC member Terry Wilkinson. 'He'll be missed for the great contribution he's always made to the union and because he's an honest and amusing man. He's a pleasure to know.'

Martin is taking early retirement and moving abroad. We all wish him the very best for the future.

EC member Terry Wilkinson (right) says Martin will be missed as a union activist and a mate



Leytonstone branch members, along with EC member Terry Wilkinson and District Organiser Steve Grant, thanked Martin for a 'great contribution'

Upcoming events

○ STRATFORD REUNION – 13 APRIL

The Stratford Depot reunion will be held on Saturday 13 April in the Railway Tavern, Angel Lane, Stratford from 16.00 until late. All are welcome. A buffet will be supplied, and there will be a raffle. For more information contact Barry Moore on 07900 132 192 or Barry.Moore@dbbschenker.com. Anyone wishing to stay at the Railway Tavern should mention the reunion special rates and email info@railwaytavernhotel.co.uk or phone 020 8534 3123.

○ NORWICH LOCO REUNION - 19 APRIL

This year's Norwich Loco reunion will be held at Arkwright's social club, Hobart Square, Hall Road, Norwich on 19 April from 19:00 hours. All welcome. Free buffet. Further details from Peter Bacon on 0792 5369338 or by email to peter.bacon@ntlworld.com.

○ DIDCOT ANNUAL REUNION - 4 MAY

The Didcot branch will hold its annual reunion meeting on Saturday 4 May from noon at the GWR Staff Club in Didcot. Past, present and associate members are all equally welcome. More information from A. Lyford.

○ HITHER GREEN

The Hither Green 'Old Boys' reunion will be held on Wednesday 8 May from 12:00 in the Greyhound (Wetherspoon's) pub in London Road, Bromley (just off the Market Square). All welcome. For more information contact Ray Cooper or Len Blackford from the Retired Members' Section.

○ BRIGHTON & SUSSEX REUNION – 7 MAY

An informal open afternoon will be held for all retired and working members with a connection to Brighton and Sussex Motive Power Depots in the Brighton Railway Club, Belmont (off Dyke Road) from 14:00 on Tuesday 7 May 2013. Further details from Paul Edwards (07402 478 2780 or Paul Horan (07868 757 492).

○ ENFIELD AND NORTH EAST LONDON – 17 MAY

The annual Enfield and North East London Re-union will take place at the Jolly Butchers pub at 168 Baker Street Enfield EN1 3JS on Friday 17 May from 19:00. All ex-North East London staff and other rail staff are welcome to attend to listen to reminiscences about the 'good old days' and the odd pint. Further details from Steve Jestico on 07788153711.

Dumfries branches out

After 11 years of being part of the Ayr Branch, the Dumfries Branch held its first meeting on Sunday 10 February.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members at Ayr for their help and support over the years.

I would also like to thank all the members who attended our opening meeting, with special thanks to District Organiser Kevin Lindsay and Ayr Branch Secretary Wullie Simpson for their help and (on-going) guidance to get the branch up and running.

Jim Francis, Secretary, Dumfries



These are the pages where you talk to us. We welcome your letters, either by mail to the **ASLEF Journal at 77 St John Street London, EC1M 4NN** or by email to **journal@aslef.org.uk**. Because of our space constraints, please try to keep your contributions as short as you can. This month we continue our **STAR LETTER feature**. The immensely lucky winner will pocket a rich range of ASLEF regalia!



No fire, but still smoke in cabs

The TOC I work for has a 'no smoking in the workplace' policy as required by law. However, apart from the odd poster in the mess room, there is no evidence of this policy being enforced, and many train crew blatantly choose to ignore this law. So while workers in shops, factories and office are protected, train crew are not.

Every day I have to enter the confined space of a driving cab where the previous occupant (driver or guard) has been smoking. ASLEF strongly warns members of the consequences of other safety issues like drink, drugs and mobile phones - but I hear nothing from the union on members flouting smoking laws. Does the union check how the TOCs enforce their 'no smoking' policy?

Anybody who thinks this is a trivial matter should Google the effects of passive smoking in confined places. As the workplace is the only place I am exposed to cigarette smoke, I will hold the TOC responsible for any breathing problems I may be unfortunate enough to develop. But it would be better to see ASLEF taking action before this happens.

Phil Murray, Driver, Birmingham New Street

Fund for brother McGee

On behalf of Brother Chris McGee, his mother and the rest of his family, I would like to thank the union for supporting them, most recently with a £1,000 donation to the fund which we set up in Birkenhead aimed at paying his mortgage and house insurance while he is in prison.

Thanks also to all the branches and individuals who have donated to the fund. We are grateful to you all.

R. N. Jones, Secretary, Birkenhead branch

My fatality advice was 'don't worry, son'!

In 1964 I was a 15 year old signal box boy at Cheam in Surrey, when on a dank foggy October night someone stepped in front of a

YES TO EUROPE TRADE, NO TO THE EU

Glenis Willmott's article about the EU (February Journal) was interesting - although not entirely accurate. Sadly she's brought out the same old trade argument which simply does not stand up. The UK currently has around 40% of its trade with the EU, therefore we have around 60% of our trade with non-EU countries who are generally enjoying faster growth of trade, output, employment and living standards than EU members where with one or two exceptions, growth is minimal or negative. Before you dispute my figures perhaps Glenis Willmott would like to comment on the 'Rotterdam effect', whereby UK exports sent to non-EU countries via continental ports are erroneously counted as exports to the EU. She might also like to comment on why the EU has been unable to convince its own auditors to sign off its accounts for any of the last 18 years! If the EU were a business, its directors would be in jail.

If the UK left the EU we could continue to be a member of the European Economic Area (EEA), and trade with our European neighbours would continue in much the same way as it does now, largely because it would be in everyone's interest to do so, given that we buy a lot more from the EU than they buy from us. Furthermore if we left the EU, the UK could regain its seat on the World Trade Organisation

(WTO) and its ability to negotiate bilateral trade agreements with non-EU countries.

I could argue for a long time over the figures, but of greater concern to me is the EU's total disregard for democracy. For example we now have Herman Van Rompuy as president of 500 million EU citizens but not one of us had an opportunity to vote for him. He was simply appointed. We also have the very sinister European Arrest Warrant, under which any of us could be arrested, and held in custody without charge, for an indefinite period in any EU country.

Now we find that despite massive regulation, we have been consuming horse meat masquerading as beef in this country for some time. This is surely a classic example of how the EU has failed its citizens. I agree with Glenis that the on-going uncertainty over a referendum is harmful - so the sooner it happens the better. If the EU is such a brilliant idea why are the ruling political elites of all parties so frightened of a referendum? Remember no-one under the age of 56 has ever had the opportunity to vote on the issue, and those over 56 only voted on joining a trading block, not a European Federation.

How about devoting a full page in the Journal to the pro-independence view, just to balance things up?

Ken Hall, Horsham

train between Ewell East and Epsom.

While others dealt with the passenger and train crew, I was told to walk back to where it happened to check the line. In heavy fog I walked along the track swinging my torch when suddenly in the circle of light I saw a hand severed at the wrist. A few feet away a head lay staring at me. You can imagine the shock for a boy only three months out of school.

The support I was offered was the Station

Master putting an arm around me and saying, 'Don't worry son. You'll see lots of this.' I had to be back at work the next day.

Fifty years on, I still see those images as clearly as if it were yesterday.

In my driving career I had three fatalities and in each case the support I received from management was faultless. Everything I needed, I got. Everything I wanted, I received.

Alas now I fear for the younger drivers, as in our cheque-book driven world a driver who

cannot drive for whatever reason is a drain on resources which management will seek to eliminate at the earliest opportunity. So yes, fight for CICA - but even more important fight to ensure that railway staff who suffer trauma of any kind continue to get the full amount of support we need without any pressure from above.

**Steve Le Tissier, Retired
Driver/Trainer, West Sussex**

Backing for any way of exposing franchising

I read with interest the General Secretary's report in last month's Journal into the West Coast franchise debacle. I remember attending the AAD some years ago when National Organiser Simon Weller told conference that ASLEF had plans to bid for one of these franchises. As he said, this wouldn't have cost ASLEF any significant amount of money - and could have helped to prove that this indeed is a flawed process.

The floor didn't agree, but I welcomed the fact that the union wanted to highlight the shenanigans that most people inside the railway industry who care about its future believe goes on when awarding franchises. I hope the government start asking serious questions - and hold winning bidders (and part-time guardians of this great industry) accountable for what they leave behind.

Bidders should be asked

- What are they doing to improve services for the benefit of all passengers at a cost that everybody can afford?
- What is their strategy on job creation (for all grades) inside the industry?

It shouldn't be about the cheapest bid, because the cheapest bid comes with its own costs - the loss of jobs across the rail industry - a serious issue that the whole UK now faces. So well done Sir Richard Branson for challenging what was clearly a complete shambles. If it weren't for him this unsatisfactory process would still be taking place - and we'd all be guilty of not being bold enough to ask the 'Big Questions'.

I think any money ASLEF spends on challenging things that affects train drivers, railway staff and the greater good of the UK is money well spent.

In finishing I would like to add for the record that my wife has never taken any speeding points for myself - and I've no

PRIVATISATION NOT ALL BAD?

The front cover of January's Journal was clearly negative about the privatisation of the railway industry in the 1990's. Yet wasn't privatisation the catalyst that (synchronised with the Driver Restructuring Initiative) saw our basic pay rise from about £11K to around £23k? After that it rose steadily to £30K upward, then £40K plus, with old conditions gradually being clawed back, and working hours dropping (at least on South Eastern).

I can remember a pre-privatisation package similar to DRI being offered in the early '90s with similar changes in conditions that appeared in the later DRI which offered £14K per year, which thankfully was rejected in a ballot. It does make me wonder, though, what we would be earning now if our industry had remained fully nationalised.

It's worth bearing in mind that franchising is not full privatisation, and thus we are protected from the harsh realities of the private sector. (Apologies to any freight drivers who have experienced upheaval due to



market forces) but if we were still fully in the public sector, we would be subject to pay freezes and the like. Taking all this into consideration, are we not having the best of both worlds?

On another not-unrelated theme, if the position of trade unions had not been 'compromised' by the Tory government in the 1980s, would the 'Train Crew Concept' which allowed all railway staff to apply for the driving grades have materialised? I remember that previously both ASLEF and the NUR were vehemently opposed to 'crossing over' of staff, which I believe was due to union non-poaching rules. **Barry Dence, Driver, Ashford**

intention of ever asking her to do so!
Jeff Turner, Barnham

Generous Orgreave backing

I want to thank ASLEF officials for sending out a circular asking branches to support the Orgreave Campaign and for the article in the February Journal.

We are a three-months old grass-roots campaign of ex-NUM members and supporters based on the Sheffield-Rotherham border, where the Orgreave mass picket took place in June 1984. Our aim is a full public inquiry into the policing at Orgreave, including the violence and collusion in the recording of statements.

The donations we have received from 15 different ASLEF branches have helped to fund the printing of publicity material. We have all been uplifted to find so many ASLEF members who remember our long struggle in 1984/5 and remember fondly the activities of ASLEF members Derek Hodgkinson, Tony Richardson, Glyn Shaw and the then ASLEF President Bill Ronskley.

I'd like to thank all your members for their generosity and good wishes for success of the campaign, which you are welcome to visit at <http://otjc.org.uk> or contact us by email at

Orgreavejustice@hotmail.com
Many thanks to you all.

**Barbara Jackson, Chairperson,
Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign**

ASLEF does a fantastic job

I'm writing this letter to emphasise the fantastic work ASLEF does behind the scenes with regards to safeguarding members rights.

I have been involved in several operating incidents over a period of time including fatalities and serious operating incidents through no fault of my own. These incidents culminated in my receiving extensive treatment from various health professionals and seriously impacting on my lifestyle and health.

These issues meant I could no longer continue mainline driving and all the factors both financially and professionally that go with it meant I have had an extensive period of instability and no real continuity - all of which have had an impact on my health, well-being and private life.

During this time the conduct of ASLEF representatives (and especially Yoker LLC, Alan Reid and more recently District



(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 21)

Organiser Kevin Lindsay) has been a source of strength and inspiration to me. They have kept me informed in every aspect of my situation and worked tirelessly on my behalf, eventually finding a pleasing outcome.

In finishing I'd just like to say if it wasn't for strong and resolute union representation at every level my situation could have ended very differently.

**Unity is indeed strength.
Sean Larkin, Driver, Yoker branch**

Thanks for help at difficult time

I'd like to thank the union for its help at what was a difficult time for me.

Until recently I was a Leading Driver at FGWR Plymouth HSS. Unfortunately I have had to retire due ill health.

My union rep, Mr D Samuels,

helped me with practical advice and helped me with all my dealings with the company. This resulted in a sad, but reasonable, outcome for me.

I wish to publicly thank Dick for his help, advice, support and friendship during this difficult time. I would also like to thank C. Hammett who is FGWR's Human Resources Manager for working hard and fairly with us; and Alan Tyler, the Leading Driver at Plymouth who looked after my welfare and morale when there was no one else.

Finally, I wish good luck to all my friends and colleagues in the company in the difficult times ahead.

Mark Shackell, Retired Driver

Hands off my pension

I see on page four of the March Journal that the government is at it again - trying to get at our pensions to get them out of their financial problems.

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MOTHERWELL 100 REGALIA: To celebrate its centenary, Motherwell Branch has produced commemorative badges (£5), ties (£7 for blue, blue clip-on or maroon) and brochures (£2.50). Cheques to 'ASLEF Motherwell Branch Centenary Fund' and further information from Andy Jones on 07767077907 or motherwellbs@aslef.org.uk



FAVERSHAM branch is selling mugs and T-shirts 'devoted' to Ms Thatcher! Both are £10 and illustrate the branch view of the ex-PM's vicious right-wing policies. They can be obtained from the branch website www.aslef-favershambranch.co.uk or from Andy Cooke at (email) andycooke69@hotmail.com or (mobile) 07771923831.



ENGRAVING: ASLEF driver based in Sunderland branch offers professional engraving at reasonable prices. I can engrave anything you wish, such as the ASLEF logo on a pint tankard which is pictured. For further details contact Paul Potts by email at ppotts1969@hotmail.co.uk

VOTE FOR ME TO GO TO SEA!



I'm a driver at Paddington, I've been an ASLEF member for over 13 years – and I need your vote! I've entered a sailing competition, to sail part of a round-the-world yacht race from South Africa to Western Australia. As part of the process I need to accumulate as many votes as possible to secure my passage through to the next round. Visit www.vote4phil.co.uk to see my application.

Gore-Tex is sponsoring the competition and they just require a valid email address for you to confirm your vote. They guarantee that your email will only be used once.

**Many thanks
Phil Read, Driver, London Paddington**

Can the Trustees oversee what the government is trying to do?

At the time of privatisation, part of the 'covenant' between the workforce and the government enshrined certain protections in law. Now they are threatening to break this promise. And why? To get them out of the mess they made in the first place.

We're not going to pay for a financial hole that they dug themselves.

Can ASLEF find a loop-hole in the privatisation bill to prove that the government is breaking its promises – and make them accountable for it?
Ralph Cooper, Driver, London Blackfriars

CICA and the victim lottery

I write in response to the on-going discussion regarding CICA payments - and in particular to the letters from Mark Platt and Mark Haggerty in the March Journal. The topic of how we deal with the aftermath of fatalities raises three points from my personal perspective and experience.

Firstly, if it was ever a rule or convention that we, as drivers, were supposed to walk back or search the line following a fatality then that rule was a pointless one. I'm glad to say that following a fatality I unfortunately sustained in 2007 I didn't walk back to the actual scene and I was able to persuade the young trainman working with me not to do so

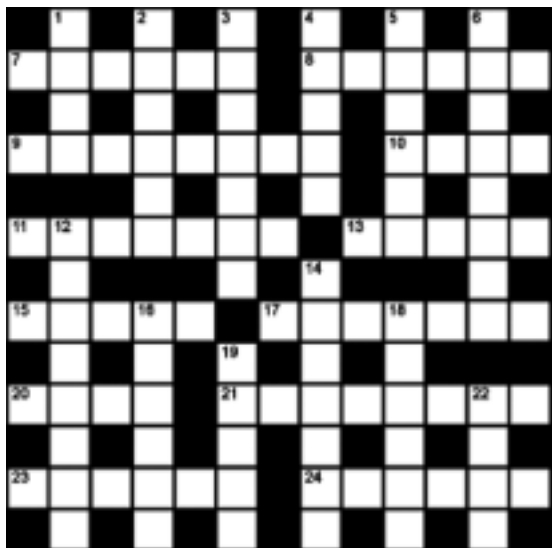
either. A fully equipped and highly skilled surgeon would have been unable to make good the damage done by 400 tons of train at 70 mph so what would be the point in a lowly driver being there?

Secondly, there is a precedent in a train driver seeking redress from the estate of the deceased following a fatality but I'm not especially proud about having sought and gained a sum of money via such means. The ability to take legal action against the estate of a deceased person rather depends on the means of that person. I imagine it would be untypical of most fatalities to have been 'fortunate' enough to have struck a relatively wealthy person, so as a means of seeking redress this method would be likely to be unsuccessful in the vast majority of cases even before considering the moral repugnancy of such an action. Why should a driver 'lucky' enough to have struck someone with a legacy be in line for a payout when another hitting someone with no assets stands to get nothing?

Finally, there is an assumption that all train drivers who are off work following a fatality still get paid full salary. At the time of the above incident I was working full-time for a cowboy open-access FOC (one that I'm pleased to report has since become defunct) and, in line with their zero 'sick' pay policy, my salary stopped as soon as the loco did. Hence the need for such drastic and maybe pioneering measures.

Chris Martin, Driver, Watford

Prize Crossword No. 84 set by Zebedee



Solution to prize crossword No 83 which appeared in the March 2013 edition of the ASLEF Journal

Congratulations to **Brian Richards** of **Leigh on Sea**

Across: 7 Banana 8 Onions 9 Beer 10 Develops 11 Thanked 13 Admit 15 Usual 17 Luggage 20 Canadian 21 Into 23 Adsorb 24 Needed

Down: 1 Hate 2 Barren 3 Saddled 4 Solve 5 Filled 6 Snapping 12 Husbands 14 Cunning 16 Amazon 18 Guided 19 Limbs 22 They

Across

- 7 At a greater altitude (6)
 8 Veg that make you cry? (6)
 9 Plotting (8)
 10 Consumes (4)
 11 Cloudier (7)
 13 Elegant sailing vessel (5)
 15 Exploiting (5)
 17 Relies on (7)
 20 Even handed (4)
 21 In plenty (8)
 23 Mistakes (6)

24 Number (6)**Down**

- 1 Metallic element (4)
 2 Protective device used by early soldiers (6)
 3 Expresses approval (7)
 4 Indistinct or hazy in outline (5)
 5 Movie theatre (6)
 6 Grabbed (8)
 12 On the next floor above (8)
 14 The real thing - no

fake! (7)

- 16 Thin (6)
 18 Finishing (6)
 19 Lift up, maybe bread? (5)
 22 Catches in a net (4)



MARKS & SPENCER

The winner of this month's crossword will receive Marks & Spencer vouchers to the value of £25

Name.....

Address.....

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.....Postcode.....

Thanks for all your responses to the 82nd ASLEF crossword in the March edition. If you complete this month's crossword please send the solution to the Editor, ASLEF Journal, 77 St John Street, London EC1M 4NN by the 14th of the issue month.

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FREE LEGAL ADVICE ASLEF also provides first class free legal advice – both for members and for their dependents. In the last year, ASLEF has recovered £6,769,848 in damages for all types of cases.

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